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ABSTRACT

Concepts and methods intended to enhance the relationship between psychoanalytic theory and psychological anthropology are proposed and illustrations of the application of these concepts and methods are given based on ethnographic data on the Gusii of Kenya. Using five minimum assumptions about the universality of personality, an ethnographic approach to understanding the self is proposed--an approach that uses the methods of social anthropology to obtain empirical data of psychological as well as social significance. Emphasis is on three categories: (1) routine interpersonal encounters, in which the self is presented to another according to a conventional code of conduct; (2) public occasions, in which the self is represented to communicants through a conventional code of religious, political, or aesthetic symbols; and (3) autobiographical discourse, in which the self is represented as a personal history placed in a conventional framework of normative self-description. A discussion of these categories is followed by a description of two general hypotheses used to explain research on these three bodies of narratives about the self--the common-denominator hypothesis and the complementarity hypothesis. This research on the adult self among the Gusii of Kenya illustrates the use of psychosocial analysis of cultural materials and individual case studies as a means of: (1) exploring the experience of adults in the Gusii community; and (2) drawing valid conclusions about how individuals function psychologically in their cultural environment. A seven-page list of project research papers concludes the document. (LH)

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The Self in Culture I: Person-Centered Ethnography and Psychoanalytic Anthropology

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The Self in Culture I:

Person-Centered Ethnography and Psychoanalytic Anthropology

Robert A. LeVine

Introduction

Recent trends in psychoanalytic theory and psychological anthropology show a common direction - away from abstract theoretical constructs and toward concepts grounded in observation and experience. There is a new concern with and respect for factual evidence, combined with a new suspicion of the conventions by which facts have been classified for theoretical and diagnostic purposes. In psychoanalysis, the theoretical innovations proposed by Kohut (1971, 1977) and Schafer (1975) are based on the primacy of clinical observation in the psychoanalytic situation and use what Kohut calls "experience-near" concepts and Schafer calls "action language" to replace Freud's abstract metapsychology of drives and structures. In psychological anthropology, there is also renewed interest in the personal experience of individuals and the interpersonal encounter between anthropologist and informant, now examined through ethnographic and biographical data without the intervention of psychological tests. This convergence of directions offers the possibility of a new relationship between two fields that have been connected since Freud's (1913) Totem and Taboo. In this article I shall present some concepts and methods I think will contribute to that relationship; the following two articles will offer illustrations of their application to ethnographic data on the Gusii of Kenya.

The new empiricism in psychological anthropology includes three parallel tendencies: The first is the descriptive ethnography of indigenous concepts of the person, the lifespan, the self, behavior and mental function in normality and deviance. This has its roots in an older anthropological literature that includes the works of Arnold Van Gennep (1908), Marcel Mauss (1938) and A. Irving Hallowell (1955). The ethnographic studies of Marcel Griaule (1947), Kenneth Read (1955) and George Devereux (1961) on indigenous concepts of the person and of psychopathology are also precursors of contemporary work. Recent attention to this domain of ethnographic description has come from social anthropologists whose interests are not primarily psychological, such as Clifford Geertz (1973, 1975), Meyer Fortes (1973, 1977), Anne Straus (1977), Michelle Rosaldo (1979), and McKim Mariott (1980), as well as those whose interests are, e.g., Jean Briggs (1970), Robert I. Levy (1973) and Paul Riesman (1977). This is the literature of ethnopsychology, i.e., the description of folk categories, beliefs and values related to individual behavior and experience. Its aim is the faithful translation and explication of the terms in which personal experience in another culture is organized.

A second tendency is the renewed use of case studies in individual adults observed and interviewed over an extended period of time in the course of anthropological field work. These case studies differ from the life histories of earlier culture and personality research (see Frank, 1979) in being more focused on the personal meanings of particular social behavior or social positions. The collection of case studies edited by Vincent Crapanzano and Vivian Garrison (1977), for example, is focused on spirit possession, the monograph of Waud Kracke (1979) on political

leadership in an Amazonian group, that of Sarah LeVine (1979) on the situations of young married women in an East African society. Some investigators like Obeyesekere (1977) and Kracke (1979) offer Freudian interpretations of their material; others like Levy (1973) abstain from depth interpretation; but all provide contextual material to permit cultural as well as psychological understanding.

The third tendency is the growing recognition that biographical information collected in the field is inevitably filtered through the relationship between field worker and biographical subject, reflecting the personalities of both and the nature of their interaction, and that this process deserves explicit examination and publication. This trend might be traced to 1967, the year when two ultimately influential books were published. One was Bronislaw Malinowski's secret diary of his field experience in the Trobriand Islands, showing this pioneer of ethnographic field work to have a range of human passions not previously suspected - or at least documented. The other was George Devereux's From Anxiety to Method in the Behavioral Sciences, a strong statement for the importance of understanding counter-transference in anthropological research. The first monograph that focused on personal relationships in the field situation was Jean Briggs' Never in Anger (1970), a revealing account of her life and work with the Eskimos. The ongoing and developing relationship between investigator and subject is central to Sarah LeVine's recent (1979) account of Gusii women and is in the forefront of Vincent Crapanzano's (1980) monograph on a Moroccan healer. This trend as I see it represents both an honest confrontation with the limits and biases of all data-gathering methods based on interpersonal disclosure and an attempt, following the example of Freud, to treat distortions and concealments as

pathways toward deeper understanding for the investigator of sufficient patience and devotion to the task.

Taken together, these three tendencies comprise a new attack on subjective experience in other societies - its indigenous cultural constituents, its form and content in individual lives, and its problematic role in the investigative relationship. This new attack operates without an explicit consensus on methods of data collection or comparative analysis. It is a development of and from the ethnographic tradition in anthropology: a person-centered ethnography, taking the individual perspective on culture and experience rather than that of a collective system or external observer. Standard ethnography produces a cultural description analogous to a map or aerial photograph of a community; person-centered ethnography tells us what it is like to live there - what features are salient to its inhabitants. Like other anthropological field workers, person-centered ethnographers often aspire to "thick description" (Geertz, 1973), i.e., an account of sufficient detail and diversity to reveal the meanings that lie behind behavior. This is a modest step toward generalization compared to cross-cultural hypothesis-testing, but it represents the conviction that greater ambitions cannot be fulfilled without data of better quality.

I shall propose and illustrate here another line of work in person-centered ethnography, one that fills a gap in that field and is especially significant for the relationship between psychoanalysis and anthropology. Person-centered ethnography, as outlined above, includes the investigation of (1) cultural categories and beliefs concerning the person, (2) individual lives, and (3) the intercultural research relationship. Left out of this outline are the processes of communication by which all

three are connected. Interpersonal communication is the medium through which we discover how individuals experience their lives and how cultural beliefs shape that experience. The investigator in a foreign culture must first discover how to de-code the messages of that culture. This involves an ethnography of communication (see Hymes, 1974), which goes beyond translation of words and explication of belief systems to describe the indigenous conventions for disclosing, concealing and disguising personal information in interpersonal communication. All investigators working on individual experience in other cultures learn these conventions, usually as a stepping-stone to the study of particular individuals. I am proposing that these conventions be made objects of inquiry in themselves, and that their description and analysis can provide unique insight into the cultural constitution of individual defenses.

In linguistics and social anthropology there has been much research in recent years on the conventions that regulate face-to-face communication and those that govern representational meaning in religious and aesthetic narratives as well as in conversation. The psychological functions of these conventions have not been examined. By conceptualizing the pragmatics of interpersonal communication in psychosocial terms, I hope to lay the basis for a new psychoanalytic anthropology focused on the accessible surface rather than the hidden depths.

This may seem an abandonment of what is most distinctive about psychoanalysis, its theory of unconscious motivation. I believe, however, that psychoanalysis is first of all a method of clinical discovery (LeVine, 1973: 185-214). As a method, psychoanalysis embodies systematic procedures for making inferences concerning intrapsychic function and structure from

the free associations of patients. Those procedures and the principles of method they represent have often been ignored in the more speculative depth interpretations of psychoanalytic anthropology (LeVine, 1973: 204-206). To re-focus psychoanalytic anthropology on the surface available to observation is to return to the empathic stance of clinical psychoanalysis - "listening to the patient" - but with the recognition that empathic listening in another culture is impossible without knowledge of the culture-specific meanings and contexts through which feelings are expressed.

The strategy of studying cultural meanings in detail rather than striving directly for psychological depth is based on the realization that depth interpretations are not valid without contexual evidence to support them. This is as true in psychoanalysis as in other investigative situations. Although Freud (1909a: 608) declared "The interpretation of dreams is the royal road to a knowledge of the unconscious activities of the mind," he did not mean that dreams could be understood out of context. On the contrary, his writings make it abundantly clear that dreams reported in psychoanalysis have already undergone secondary revision and that the patient selectively reports them in the context of an ongoing patient-analyst realtionship involving resistance, transference and other potential distortions of the original dream-thoughts. The analyst must place the manifest dream in the subjective contexts revealed by the patient's associations in order to infer the latent meaning of the dream. This seemed to Freud like a "royal road" in comparison with previous approaches to unconscious mental activity, but it actually requires painstaking and disciplined contextual analysis.

In psychoanalytic anthropology, following Freud's more speculative writings in Totem and Taboo (1913) and other non-clinical works, the importance of contextual analysis was largely lost, and with it, the credibility of psychoanalytic depth interpretations for most anthropologists. Academic psychology seemed to offer a more scientifically respectable "royal road" in its personality tests, which promised direct and privileged access to deeper levels of intrapsychic structure than an anthropological field worker could otherwise obtain. Projective tests such as the Rorscharch and TAT were treated like psychological x-ray devices that could detect underlying structure independent of its social or cultural context; hence the preference for "blind" analysis test results in culture and personality research prior to Lindzey's (1961) authoritative review and critique. Projective test responses, however, proved to be as "contaminated" by interpersonal expectancies, and as uninterpretable without knowing the situational contexts in which they were elicited, as any other social performance. A major lesson from research in personality and social psychology of the past two decades is that there can be no psychological x-ray that by-passes contextual analysis, no way of tapping "pure" dispositional competence uninfluenced by the conditions surrounding its observable performance - any more than it is possible to speak without speaking a particular language (Geertz, 1973: 87). Deprived of the illusion of "independent" and "direct" personality assessment, the psychological anthropologist has no choice but to ground psychological investigation in an ethnographic analysis of communicative contexts.

An Ethnographic Approach to the Self: Assumptions and Categories

The psychosocial approach I propose makes the following assumptions:

1. Individual behavior is purposive, goal-oriented, intentional. Personal intentions include responses to economic incentives (and disincentives), cultural ideals, and unconscious wishes. Thus all individuals have adaptive goal-orientations, reflecting environmental contingencies, and defensive goal-orientations, reflecting contingencies of subjective well-being.

2. The goals of individuals, and their priorities for means of attaining them, are represented in their conscious experience, though in varying degrees of explicitness, conceptual organization and symbolic disguise. The images, labels and concepts with which they represent ends and means are derived from the shared vocabulary and belief system of their culture.

3. Cultural representations of ends and means often combine adaptive and defensive functions in a single pragmatic formula, fostering the rationalization of custom in culturally specific "common sense."

4. Self-awareness and introspection are universal in human experience; the self is a central feature of personal and cultural representations of the individual acting toward goals. Following Roy Schafer (1968), the self can be distinguished as a locus, an agent and an object. Following Hallowell (1955), the self can be viewed as personal continuity in experience, memory and social identity. However collectivist the ideology of a group, the subjective experience of adults distinguishes between actions of the self as opposed to another, and the affects of pride and shame are distributed accordingly.

5. Cultures vary in the attributes of the ideal self over the life course, in the actions with which pride and shame are associated, and in expectancies for autonomy or interdependence in the domains of social action.

With these minimal assumptions about human personality I am attempting to construct an ethnographic approach to the self, one that uses the methods of social anthropology to obtain empirical data of psychological as well as social significance. The data concern the conventions of communication in three arenas: routine interpersonal encounters, public occasions, and autobiographical discourse. In routine encounters, the self is presented to another according to a conventional code of conduct; on public occasions, the self is represented to communicants through a conventional code of religious, political or aesthetic symbols; in autobiographical discourse the self is represented as a personal history placed in a conventional framework of normative self-description.

Within each of these arenas the ethnographer can identify, record and analyze narratives about the self that are salient in the public life of a community and the private lives of its members. Cultural narratives (e.g., those embodied in ritual) have usually been examined from the perspective of their social functions, their contribution to the solidarity of social groups and relationships. The approach I am proposing seeks to uncover the functions of such narratives for the individuals who communicate them. The analysis of cultural material for psychological content has long been rejected as reductionism by many anthropologists. This rejection overlooks the fact that conventions, particularly those that are unwritten and unenforced by formal agencies, do not exist independent

of the individuals who maintain them and selectively transmit them from one generation to the next. Viewing custom more as drama than as law, I find it plausible to assume that social performances reflect not merely the dictates of the script but the interpretations of those who enact it.

The Gusii narratives I am analyzing, for example, have been retained as conventions of communicative performance over the twenty-year period (1955-1976) of my observations, despite the opposing pressures of Christianity, formal education, urban influences, and rising costs. Most Gusii individuals, acting voluntarily and without explicit ideological movement, continued to perform most of their indigenous rituals in 1976 as before. Had they found the rituals unsatisfying, irrelevant or implausible, they could have abandoned them. Instead, their revisions have permitted them to fit into the practicalities of contemporary life, emphasizing those elements experienced as essential. No external legitimation was sought for these revisions; they were the product of group process at the community level where individual and collective representations can be adjusted to one another and find a synthesis in the temporary conventions of a folk culture. It is the meanings of these representations, reflecting both cultural tradition and psychological salience, that can be interpreted in psychosocial terms.

The categories for analyzing cultural narratives about the self in psychosocial terms can be constructed on the basis of existing anthropological research. Let us begin with the norms of self-presentation in interpersonal encounters, which Erving Goffman (1959, 1963, 1971) has so effectively conceptualized for our own society in sociological terms. He has shown that the rules governing our interaction - our etiquette,

manners, and courtesies - constitute dramas of social censorship involved in the maintenance of public order. I want to suggest that this censorship serves individual purposes as well as societal ones, and that cultural differences in what is concealed can reveal much about how the self is experienced by persons of differing cultures.

The norms of face-to-face interaction in routine encounters are involved in the regulation of the individual's sexual, aggressive and self-assertive tendencies, which are strongly motivated but dangerous to himself as well as others; they invite psychological analysis and investigation. These norms or conventions of interpersonal encounters vary widely among human societies and can be classified on the basis of their forms and contents. Beginning with contents, I distinguish norms of propriety, conviviality and humility. Norms of propriety regulate sexual behavior in social situations and proscribe, in specified classes of encounters, behaviors that tend to elicit sexual arousal, embarrassment and disgust in other persons. They include those elaborate codes of kin avoidance found in African, Melanesian and American Indian societies (and to which Freud gave attention in Totem and Taboo, 1913: 19), as well as many less explicit conventions surpressing sexually tinged intimacy in non-kin as well as kin relationships. Norms of conviviality prohibit aggressive displays in many social situations and prescribe prosocial or friendly communications. They include greetings and farewells, rules of hospitality, and the varieites of ritual politeness Goffman (1971) calls supportive and remedial interchanges and tie-signs. Norms of humility regulate boasting, gloating and conversational dominance, and specify face-to-face standards of respect for social statuses. They

include rules of turn-taking and precedence in conversation as well as all other deference customs.

Most individuals in most encounters try to maintain an appearance of propriety, conviviality, and humility, i.e., they attempt to present themselves as persons who are appropriately restrained, friendly and respectful according to the standards of their culture. In so doing, they participate in a form of social censorship, concealing from public attention facts about themselves (including their emotional reactions and intentions) which they experience as too dangerous to disclose. By acting in accordance with the normative script, they disavow certain of their sexual, aggressive and self-assertive tendencies. By examining these scripts comparatively, we are assessing the expectations for disavowal found among adults of diverse cultures. Insofar as one culture prescribes disavowal of an intention or reaction that is acceptable in another, we can predict what adults in the two settings are likely to disclaim as attributes of the self. This is ethnographic information of psychological significance.

The normative concealment of information about the self cannot be reduced to simple avowal or disavowal; cultures provide a great variety of interactional scripts for disguising intentions and guaranteeing that issues will be avoided in everyday encounters. In each of the three domains (propriety, conviviality, and humility) ethnographic evidence concerning these scripts can be categorized in terms of (a) the focus of disavowal (situation and behavior assigned highest priority for proscription), (b) intensity and generality of disavowal (number of situations and types of behavior covered by proscription) and (c) style of disavowal (explicit taboos, social formality, individual inhibitions). A particular culture's

norms thus described will yield a culturally distinctive profile of interactive scripts, suggesting how and to what extent sexuality, aggression and self-assertion are regulated in face-to-face encounters. As I shall show in detail in the second article, Gusii norms of propriety were characterized by greater intensity and generality than those of conviviality and humility, particularly in comparison with other East African cultures, and constituted a set of taboos around which the presentation of self was organized. But even in the domains of conviviality and humility, where Gusii norms strike the visitor as less demanding than those of neighboring peoples, intensive ethnographic investigation reveals specific foci of disavowal, suggesting what the Gusii consider the greatest threats to the self in aggressive and self-assertive behavior.

The second arena of communication, that of public occasions in which the self is represented through a code of religious, political or aesthetic symbols, may seem less obviously structured than the first, but is familiar territory to social anthropologists. The public occasions I refer to include ceremonies, rituals, games and spectacles, dramatic and musical performances, and communicative performance in the literary and visual arts.

Anthropologists have long been concerned with the de-coding of symbols used in public rituals, and have developed methods that can lead to psychological understanding. Radcliffe-Brown concluded his book on the Andaman Islanders, published in 1922, with the following thought:

> It should now, I hope, be evident that the ceremonial customs of the Andaman Islands form a closely connected system, and that we cannot understand their meaning if we only consider each one by itself, but must study the whole system to arrive at an interpretation.

His method in that study was not only to solicit indigenous explanations of ceremonial customs but to focus on "customs" (i.e., symbols or emotional reactions) that recurred in numerous ceremonies, on the assumption that their unexplained meaning would become more evident when examined across different ritual contexts. This approach resembles that of the psychoanalyst examining an individual's recurrent dream, fantasy or transference reaction, attempting to identify its common meaning through the contexts that recurrently elicit it in a large body of diverse material. Radcliffe-Brown's method was used to good effect by Monica Wilson (1957) in her classic Rituals of Kinship Among the Nyakyusa, which approaches but does not involve psychoanalytic interpretation.

Victor W. Turner (1967, 1969) has added to the anthropologist's methods for de-coding ritual symbols by close observation of particular ongoing events and by conceptual clarification of ritual transformations of the person in healing and life crises. He distingushes the exegetical meaning of a symbol (the indigenous explanation) from its operational meaning (derived from observation of its use in various contexts) and its positional meaning (its place in the indigenous belief system). Intensive observation enables him to deal with the (multiple meanings of) dominant symbols, conceptualizing them as uniting sensory and ideological meanings that explain their emotional appeal and power. Though influenced by Freud (Turner, 1978) and affirming the potential value of a psychoanalytic investigation into ritual symbols (Turner, 1967: 33-38), Turner does not attempt psychoanalytic interpretation.

Thus there exist in social anthropology procedures for explicating the shared meanings of recurrent symbols in a comprehensive series of

observed ritual performances. The focus in such procedures is on rituals as performed and observed (rather than as remembered and recounted) and on the probing of a system from which each ritual or symbol derives part of its meaning. To go beyond the social and cultural level of interpretation toward psychological analysis we must identify those sequences of dramatic action in a ritual that are centered on persons (or non-human agents to whom intentions are attributed) and which can be taken as collective representations of a self - perhaps an ideal self, a renewed self, an endangered self, but nevertheless an image of self which communicants are expected to share. Those sequences form the corpus of narrative material for analysis, which takes as its purpose the explication of recurrent dramas about the self that communicants find satisfying. This is cultural material, but it cannot fail to have psychological significance.

More specifically, in analyzing ritual performance as psychologically significant narrative, we ask: what emotions and intentions are being attributed to the central figures in the ritual action? The emotions indicate the state of subjective well-being (positive or negative) attributed to the represented self; the intentions indicate what measures the self is represented as taking to improve or ensure its subjective well-being. In the Gusii funeral, for example, an animal sacrifice must be performed the night after the burial; this is known as ogokendia enyomba, "cooling the house." Exegesis makes it clear that the dead person is represented as angry at his or her survivors; in effect, jealous of their living after the deceased's death. This is the emotion that poses the problem; the spirit's response to its own emotion is the intention of killing the survivors. As for the latter, the emotion attributed to them

is fear of the spirit's vengeance, to which they respond with the intention of protecting the domestic group by placating the spirit; hence, the sacrifice is performed. Both the spirit of the deceased and the survivors can be legitimately seen as representations of self to which significant attributions of emotion and intention are made in the conventional narrative of the ritual. In portraying the spirit's emotion and intentions after death, the deceased is the self-as-agent and the survivor(s) the self-as-object; when the focus shifts to the ritual performance, the survivor is self-as-agent and the deceased is self-as-object. The sequence as a whole tells us something about how Gusii represent a person who has suffered a unique loss and a person who feels threatened by a powerful force, but it must be examined in relation to other narratives before conclusions about culturally constituted defenses can be drawn.

The third arena of communication, that of autobiographical discourse, may seem anomalous in an approach focused on the analysis of cultural narratives. I assume that autobiography exists as a cultural form in every human society where people engage in retrospective evaluation of their lives and where some discuss their life histories in evaluative terms with others. I assume further that in all societies certain life histories are considered worth communicating and become conventionalized in several ways: through the standardization of sequences of action selected for dramatic emphasis, and through the application of cultural norms of age-specific performance and of culturally valued life goals. These autobiographies become prototypes of the self in action for adults in the community. In societies without literature, autobiographical discourse can be found in discussions between healers and their patients and leaders and their followers, in gossip between neighbors, and in many other

communicative contexts. A series of such narratives should reveal cultural organization and be susceptible to psychosocial analysis.

We can ask of autobiographical narrative as we do of ritual narratives: what emotions and intentions are attributed to the central figures? When Gusii accuse their neighbors of bewitching them, a fairly standard tale is told. The neighbor is jealous due to loss of children, crops or cattle when others have survived and prospered; responding to his or her own emotion of jealousy, the neighbor decides (sometimes influenced by others) to commit witchcraft against the more fortunate teller of the tale, who responds with fear and the intention to protect herself and family with protective medicine. (The autobiographer may in fact have purchased dangerous retaliatory socery medicine but usually conceals the intention to strike back, admitting only the desire to protect.) This conventional narrative reveals something of how interpersonal situations are construed, presented and managed in a Gusii community, comparing it with others from within the arena of autobiographical discourse as well as outside it will make possible a psychological interpretation.

In this section I have attempted to show that with a minimum of assumptions about the universals of personality, an investigator using an ethnographic approach to the self as presented in interaction and represented in ritual and autobiography could collect and categorize data of psychological significance. My emphasis has been on the categories that permit the data of person-centered ethnography to be organized as cultural narratives revealing the censorship of sexual, aggressive and self-assertive tendencies and the attribution of emotions and intentions to the self and others. These are the raw materials for a new psychoanalytic anthropology focused on the surface available to ethnographic description. In the next section I introduce the theoretical purposes to which these materials can be put.

Hypotheses and Theories

Two general hypotheses guide my research on these three bodies of narratives about the self: the first, which might be called the common-denominator hypothesis, is that there is a continuity in meanings associated with the self across the three arenas of communication, and that this continuity reveals the wishes and fears shared by the communicants about themselves. The second, which might be called the complementarity hypothesis, is that the wishes and fears subjected to most intense censorship in the self-presentation of routine encounters are given dramatic expression in the more abstract self-representations of public occasions, where cultural forms invoke positional identities in place of personal ones (Irvine, 1979). Thus what is forbidden in the realm of everyday social interaction finds disguised expression in ritual and aesthetic form. This phenomenon is familiar to psychoanalysts and anthropologists alike; but the latter have been reluctant to explain it in psychoanalytic terms. Thus Gluckman (1955) writes of "rituals of rebellion" and Turner (1969) of "structure vs. anti-structure," invoking a cultural dialectic that lacks grounding in individual experience. In a small community, however, it is apparent that the same individuals participate in everyday social interaction and communicate in public ritual on certain occasions. Each person is involved in both arenas, and the relation between the two is as much a psychological as social problem.

To illustrate the kind of evidence that might support the common-denominator hypothesis, we can re-examine the Gusii examples of the funeral sacrifice and the witchcraft accusations - drawn from the arenas of public occasions and autobiography, respectively. In the first,

the deceased is portrayed as being murderously angry at his family for surviving him; out of fear ofhis intentions, they seek protection by placating him with a sacrifice. In the second, the witch is portrayed as angry at her neighbors for their relative advantage (in attaining economic or reproductive goals) and as plotting to kill (one of) them, in fear of this design, the neighbor (who is telling the story) seeks help through protective and retaliatory medicines obtained from practitioners. Previous analyses (e.g., Mayer, 1954) have emphasized the different responses to fear in the two cases as demonstrating that spirits of the deceased and witches are in contrasting moral categories: the spirit, whose intentions are legitimate, must be placated, but the witch, whose intentions are illicit, can be thwarted by retaliation. It is equally evident, however, that despite their divergence in morality, both the deceased and the witch are represented as responding to loss or misfortune with an anger, envy, and homicidal intent that threatens the lives of others: the similarity in emotion and intent attributed to the person who suffers loss is particularly striking because it recurs across the boundaries of moral categories (the good spirit, the bad witch) and the genres of cultural narrative (ritual and gossip) found in different arenas of communication. This kind of evidence supports a common-denominator hypothesis concerning the meanings of cultural representations of self across arenas and specifies the emotions and intentions attributed to the self in particular situations. To test the hypothesis, it is necessary to examine a comprehensive body of narratives in each arena and to identify systematically the recurrent attributions of emotion and intention that indicate continuity of meaning, both within and between the genres.

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To illustrate evidence relevant to the complementarity hypothesis, we can return to the Gusii norms of self-presentation in routine encounters, their scripts for maintaining cultural standards of propriety, conviviality and humility in social interaction. There is a dialectic familiar to anthropologists built into these norms, for the script for maintaining sexual propriety between parents and children (or children-in-law) is explicitly reversed for interaction between grandparents and grandchildren: they are expected to engage in good-humored sexual banter and abuse, Both the adjacent-generation and alternate-generation scripts apply broadly to everyone of a generation within the clan, not only to "real" parents and grandparents, so the norms of kin interaction constitute a general code of conduct for everyday life. Another dimension of the dialectic is evident in the arena of public occasions, particularly the annual initiation ceremonies, whose narrative scripts include obscenity and erotic behavior that is forbidden on other occasions. It is particularly noteworthy that the traditional songs of initiation direct public attention to emotions and intentions that are disavowed by Gusii propriety norms: e.g., sexual attraction between married women and their husbands' brothers, sex play between boys and girls. Similarly, conviviality norms are normatively breached at funerals, where neighbors can be accused of jealousy and hostility toward the deceased, thus publicizing the ill will that is the focus of disavowal in everyday encounters. Rituals involve a degree of formality, as defined by Irvine (1979), that permits the individual to assume a positional identity for the performance of acts revealing emotions and intentions that can be disavowed as personal attributes when the performance is over. Like an actor on a stage, the Gusii who makes bawdy jokes to a grandparent,

sings obscene songs at the initiation ceremony, or makes serious accusations at a funeral, does not expect to be held personally responsible for it afterwards.

In the arena of autobiographical discourse among the Gusii, personal responsibility for the revelation of emotions and intentions which are disavowed in the code of routine encounters is avoided by attributing them to others. In gossip, rumor transmission, and the life histories that healers tell their patients, the self (i.e., the teller of the tale) is usually represented as an innocent victim of the malevolence of others or an observer of others who perform immoral acts. The ritual and autobiographical genres in Gusii culture, then, contain many examples of complementarity with the norms of self-presentation, revealing emotions and intentions disavowed in the latter but under conditions that disclaim them as attributes of self. This is rich material for the analysis of culturally constituted defense mechanisms and defnesive styles; it requires the same systematic attention as the common denominators of self-representation.

These brief examples from the Gusii of Kenya suggest that in examining cultural narratives from the three arenas of communication, guided by a focus on continuities and complementarities in the attribution of emotions and intentions, it is possible to reconstruct the interactional and representational worlds shared by Gusii adults.

This approach to the self can be set in a broader framework of theory and method. Person-centered ethnography can provide data on the interactional and representational worlds of the individual - "society" and "culture," respectively, as manifest in individual lives. To describe the individual's interactional world is to locate her in the flow of

communicative exchanges that constitute the observable social situations of her environment. Describing the individual's representational world is to portray the inhabitants of those situations, and of other situations she imagines, in the forms those inhabitants are subjectively imagined.

Most theoretical formulations in psychological anthropology can be re-cast as proposed relationships between the interactional and representational worlds of the individual. A behavioristic formulation, for example, might posit that habits acquired in social interaction are generalized to other real and imaginary situations, thus resulting in continuity of response between the two worlds. A model based on the psychoanalytic concepts of conflict and defense conceives of the interactional world as generating conflicts that are resolved in the defensive fantasies of the representational world. Cultural determinist and cultural idealist approaches predict that models derived from the representational world guide the social behavior of the interactional world. A transference model, based on Freudian, neo-Freudian or behavioristic premises, predicts that the interactional world of the individual in childhood shapes her representational world in adulthood. A variety of other developmental formulations is possible.

Cultural narratives concerning the self are social constructions reflecting the conventions that contribute to individual thought and action; they do not reflect the interactional profile or imaginary world of any particular individual. In building an accurate description of these conventions, however, the anthropological observer is confronted with the same polarity between interaction and representation, i.e., between a routine world of possibilities heavily limited by social relations

and survival requirements, and an imaginary world in which the impossible becomes possible, the unjustifiable is justified, the past is re-worked, aspirations are satisfied, and tensions resolved. In proposing the common-denominator and complementarity hypotheses, I am assuming a relationship between the conventions of these different worlds, such that issues recurrently posed in the arena of routine social encounters are addressed on public occasions and in autobiographical discourse. For a small community, the average expectable profile of interaction (in kin and neighborhood relationships, for example) is the presumed context in which personal problems are formulated, dramatized and resolved in the other two arenas of interpersonal communication. Thus there is continuity in social expectancies across the three arenas, a continuity that includes the intentions and affects attributed to individuals, however distinctively portrayed in each type of narrative. Insofar as these expectancies form part of individual experience as well as social relations, they can be conceived of as constituting a psychosocial continuity in the conventions of interpersonal communication.

When we study these conventions in a particular society, we seek to discover those expected sequences of action that constitute the unifying and indispensible framework for decoding dramas about the self in all three areas of communication, as well as those sequences by which the three arenas are differentiated and contrasted. In doing so, we encounter and record the distinctions between public and private, concealment and revelation, disguise and hyperbole - as they structure the expectable tensions and resolutions of narrative action in the life of a community and the lives of its members.

There are of course severe limits to the psychoanalytic insight possible from any cultural analysis. The argument of this article has been that cultural understanding is not only a necessary prelude to depth psychology in any particular society but also can yield valuable insight into the contents and quality of personal experience, including defensive styles, in that setting. But a description of conventions does not indicate the variety of ways in which they are used by individuals for their diverse purposes. For this, we must have case material describing actual sequences of action rather than simply expectable ones. In our research on the adult self among the Gusii of Kenya, we are pursuing the psychosocial analysis of cultural materials, as proposed here, and individual case studies, as illustrated in the monograph by S. LeVine (1979), to explore the experience of adults in a Gusii community and draw some valid conclusions about how they function psychologically in their cultural environment.

FOOTNOTES

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